

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 330

HE 020 013

AUTHOR Carter, Robert T.; And Others
TITLE White Student Attitudes toward Blacks: Implications for Black Student Recruitment and Retention. Research Report No. 12-85.
INSTITUTION Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE Dec 85
NOTE 23p.
AVAILABLE FROM Counseling Center, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Students; *College Students; Higher Education; Interpersonal Relationship; Peer Relationship; Questionnaires; *Racial Attitudes; *State Universities; *Student Attitudes; *White Students
IDENTIFIERS *University of Maryland College Park

ABSTRACT

The attitudes of white students toward blacks at the University of Maryland, College Park, were studied. A total of 55 female and 39 male students completed an anonymous version of the Situational Attitude Scale, which contains social and personal situations followed by bipolar adjectives (e.g., happy-sad) that students use to indicate their reactions to the situations. Five situations were used with students attending summer orientation. Two forms of the questionnaire were constructed, each of which contained exactly the same situations, except one form made no mention of race, and the other referred to blacks. Findings indicate that white student attitudes toward blacks were generally negative, and that situations that required the most sustained, intimate contact were the situations in which whites viewed blacks the most negatively. Some differences in reactions by men and women to the situations were found. In order to facilitate recruitment and retention of black students, it is recommended that college personnel promote a campus environment that respects and encourages cultural differences. Both forms of the questionnaire are appended. (SW)

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Robert T. Carter, Timothy J. White And
William E. Sedlacek

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SUMMARY

Historically, studies which examined attitudes of white students toward blacks have found that whites hold negative attitudes toward blacks. However, in light of efforts in the '70's and '80's to increase minority enrollment on college campuses, the present study was designed to assess the current state of white student attitudes toward blacks at the University of Maryland, College Park.

It was found that white students still perceive blacks negatively, particularly in intimate situations. Results are discussed in terms of recruitment and retention of minorities.

White Student Attitudes Toward Blacks: Implications for Black Student Recruitment and Retention

Much of the research on student racial attitudes and perceptions has examined black and white students attitudes toward each other (e.g., Brause & Abston, 1981; Gaertner and McLaughlin, 1983; Greenberg & Rosenfield, 1979; Jones, 1979; Minatoya and Sedlacek, 1984; Sedlacek, Brooks & Mindus, 1973).

These studies found that whites and blacks have differing views, attitudes, and perceptions of one another. The literature on racial attitudes has examined a number of sources of influence for student attitudes and perceptions. Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus (1973) found that white students and their parents held similar, and basically negative attitudes toward blacks. However, students were more positive in their attitudes than were their parents, who indicated more negative reactions to various interracial contact situations (e.g., black moves next door, black door-to-door salesperson, and black police officer). It was also found that attitudes toward blacks varied by the sex of the respondent: white females tended to react more negatively to situations in which potential fear of physical or sexual harm was involved (Johnson & Sedlacek, 1979; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1972). Another consistent finding was that white student attitudes toward blacks were less negative in personal-social situations in which blacks are in some type of a service delivery role such as police officer or salesperson (Rodgers and Sedlacek, 1979; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1976; Sedlacek, Brooks, Christensen, Harway & Merritt, 1976).

It appears that white students tend to have generally negative attitudes toward blacks, and that personal-social situations which involve relatively close personal contact with blacks elicit the strongest negative feelings (e.g., Minatoya and Sedlacek, 1984; Rovner and Sedlacek, 1974; Sedlacek and

Brooks, 1972; Sedlacek et al., 1973; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1976; Triandis, 1964; Triandis and Davis, 1965). Blacks, however, tend to be more accepting of whites in similar situations. Minatoya and Sedlacek (1984), for example, found that blacks tended to be more positive toward increased interracial contact and were more open to more intimate contact with whites (e.g., have roommate or marry someone of another race). It is possible that studies (e.g., Merritt, Sedlacek & Brooks, 1977; Patterson & Sedlacek, 1984) of white attitude toward blacks have tapped existing cultural stereotypes held by whites.

It is also possible that the whites studied may be more ethnocentric. Greenberg and Rosenfield (1979) attempted to explore whether dislike for the outgroup (ethnocentrism), without support of cultural stereotypes, biased white causal attributions of black behavior. They found that whites high in ethnocentrism reported more derogatory attributions for black behavior than did whites low in ethnocentrism. For instance, whites high in ethnocentrism attributed success of blacks on an extra-sensory perception (ESP) task to luck rather than ability, and failure on the ESP task to lack of ability rather than bad luck. It is not clear whether the findings of the racial attitudes of whites stemmed from cultural stereotyping or from ethnocentrism, or perhaps a combination of both factors. However, as American society becomes more multi-cultural, it will become necessary for social scientists and educators to develop policies, programs and procedures for higher education which are aimed at fostering more positive interracial attitudes.

Amir (1969), when discussing how to increase interracial contact and lessen intergroup tension, suggested that more intimate and personal contact is one important element in improving interracial acceptance and understanding. It is the more intimate contact which seems to be the most difficult for whites. Many predominantly white colleges and universities have made efforts to increase

minority enrollment and retention over the last few years. However, if the predominantly white student bodies view blacks negatively, then one might expect that the resulting campus climate would hinder the recruitment and retention of black students.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the current state of white student attitudes toward blacks at a large, Eastern, public university.

Method

Ninety-four white students (55 females, 39 males) completed an anonymous version of the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970; 1972; 1976). The SAS was developed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks in a context which made psychological withdrawal difficult (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970). Given the social desirability response set problem in racial attitude measurement (Schuman & Harding, 1964; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1971; Sigall and Page, 1970), the SAS format has helped circumvent this problem and decreased the probability that the respondent might psychologically withdraw and hence avoid the racial variable.

The SAS contains a series of social and personal situations followed by ten bi-polar adjectives (e.g., happy-sad) for each situation. In each situation a black person was used as a stimulus. Participants are instructed to indicate their reactions to the situations by checking a point on each scale descriptive of their feelings. The SAS design also makes it amenable to measuring attitudes toward groups other than blacks. For example, it has been shown to be a valid measure of student attitudes toward male sex-roles (Hirt, Hoffman & Sedlacek, 1983); children (Knight, Seefeldt & Sedlacek, 1984); women (Minatoya and Sedlacek, 1983); older people (Peabody and Sedlacek, 1982); disabled persons (Stovall and Sedlacek, 1983); and Hispanics (White and Sedlacek, 1985).

The version of the SAS used in the present study contained five situations which in previous studies (e.g., Rodgers and Sedlacek, 1979) elicited white

students' attitudes and perceptions. Two forms of the questionnaire were constructed. Each form contained exactly the same situations, except that Form A made no mention of race, and Form B contained the word "black" (see Exhibit 1). If students were randomly assigned to each form, one could expect that any obtained mean differences could be attributed to the absence or presence of the racial referent "black."

Procedure

Students attending the Summer Orientation program were randomly assigned either Form A or Form B. The final page of the questionnaire contained several demographic items, including sex and race/ethnic group, and the responses of non-white students were not reported in this study. The results were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) at the .05 level.

Results

Form Differences

The overall MANOVA showed a significant main effect for Form in that 20 of the 50 items showed significant differences between Forms A and B. This suggests that students responded differently, depending upon whether they had completed the neutral or black form (see Table 1). At least five items reached significance for Situations I (new roommate), III (loose woman in hometown) and V (best friend becomes engaged). In Situation I (new roommate), students who completed the black form were significantly more likely to choose sad, hostile, uninvolved, repulsed, and can't understand to describe their feelings than were those students completing the neutral form. In Situation V (best friend becomes engaged), students with the black form indicated feeling significantly more disgusted, aggressive, angered, unexcited, and passive than did the students completing the neutral form. Finally, in

Situation III (loose woman in hometown), white students with the black form were significantly more likely to choose sad, hostile, uninvolved, repulsed, and can't understand to describe their feelings than did the students completing the neutral form.

Sex Differences

Females responded significantly differently on 10 of the 50 items (MANOVA at .05). In Situation IV (walking down the street alone), women reported feeling tensed, inferior, dumber, unfriendly, and unexcited compared to men. In Situation III (loose woman in hometown), women reported feeling more hostile, uninvolved and fearful than men. Women were more likely than men to choose inferior and threatened in describing their feelings toward Situation II (man making decisions on date).

There were no significant differences on the interaction of form and sex (overall MANOVA at .05).

Discussion

The present study was conducted in order to assess white student attitudes toward blacks at a predominantly white, Eastern public university. This study found that white student attitudes toward blacks were generally negative, and that situations which required the most sustained intimate contact were the situations in which whites viewed blacks the most negatively. These findings are consistent with previous research (Sedlacek et al., 1976). These results suggest that white student responding to the black roommate situation felt sad and nervous, and that the situation was undesirable. White student reactions to a best friend becoming engaged to a black person included disgust and anger. It may be that either white students were responding ethnocentrically, or that white students were reacting to long-held cultural stereotypes. It appears that white students may

be entering colleges and universities with rigid, negative attitudes and perceptions of blacks. The existence of such attitudes would not seem to create a warm nor supportive environment for black students. It may be that those black students who come to predominantly white universities, and who are sensitive to racial attitudes (Parham and Helms, 1981), may perceive the campus climate as hostile and unsupportive. It may also be that blacks and other minorities may come to feel that predominantly white colleges and universities are not for them. The black student's awareness of racial issues may also change during the course of their stay in college. As blacks attempt to develop relationships with whites, it is possible that the black student soon comes to learn that deep, close, lasting relationships with their white peers may not be possible. In such an environment, the black student may, among other options, be forced to choose a course of superficial contact with white peers, and associate only with other black students, e.g., all black sororities or fraternities, or groups, and/or transfer to a less hostile environment.

Fleming (1984), in a comprehensive study of blacks at predominantly black and white colleges, observed that black students in white schools typically were dissatisfied with the formal and institutional aspects of college. Black students reported feeling less institutional support. This lack of support took the form of negative interactions with instructors. Fleming also noted that in their social lives, "they experienced increasing social tension as well as interpersonal stresses," (p. 167). As a way of relieving the increased pressure, black students came to regard cultural events and political protests as the most rewarding aspects of their college lives.

If colleges or universities wish to recruit and retain larger numbers of black students, it appears that a major thrust of their efforts must be

toward greater acceptance of these students when they arrive. University student personnel and admissions officers may need to devise programs designed to aid white students in becoming more aware of their negative racial attitudes. Katz and Ivey (1977) have observed that "the effects of racism on white people are as insidious as are its effects on third world people. Racism and ethnocentric attitudes provide a barrier that encases white people so that they are unable to experience themselves and their culture as it is." (p. 485). They propose a two-week workshop experience which involves increasing white awareness of traditional beliefs and practices which support and perpetuate racist practices. The program is designed for colleges and universities, and can be offered as course credit. The writers would go a step farther and suggest that faculty and staff also be encouraged to develop more awareness of their own attitudes and behaviors, so that faculty and staff members can serve as role models for students. It may be that the attitudes toward blacks which whites hold are not exclusive to blacks, but may also be applicable to other racial/cultural groups. White and Sedlacek, (1985), for example, found similar negative attitudes toward Hispanics.

It is interesting to note the differences in reactions by men and women to the different situations. One of the advantages of having the different situations is that in workshops or training programs, different situations will communicate the points of interest to different participants; in this case, men and women. Sedlacek, Troy and Chapman (1976) provide evidence that workshops which deal with both racism and sexism will result in a greater positive shift in the attitudes of white female college students than will workshops which present either topic in isolation.

In the light of the current research findings, university personnel are urged to work toward creating a campus environment which respects, accepts, and encourages cultural differences. As our schools and universities become more multi-cultural, the issue of acceptance of cultural diversity will become more and more important. Systematic attention given to the cultural diversity issues on college and university campuses may facilitate recruitment and retention efforts. A systematic and comprehensive (i.e., from the beginning of the college experience to the end, in class and out) approach to increase respect and acceptance of cultural/racial diversity may create a genuine sense of community in which all cultures may contribute and all benefit for the betterment of human beings.

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Table 1

Means*, Standard Deviations and Analyses of Variance for Neutral and Black SAS Forms.

Item No.	Situations,** Adjective Dimensions.	Females				Males				Differences Significant at .05***
		Form A		Form B		Form A		Form B		
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	
Meet new roommate										
1.	good-bad	.88	.72	1.61	.81	.82	.73	1.54	.81	F
2.	safe-unsafe	1.12	.83	1.14	.83	1.35	.91	1.16	.97	
3.	angry-not angry	3.67	.81	2.85	.98	3.11	1.43	3.26	.92	
4.	friendly-unfriendly	.46	.82	.50	.67	.36	.58	.59	.73	
5.	sympathetic-not sympathetic	1.26	.72	2.18	.98	1.65	1.13	2.48	.89	F
6.	nervous-calm	1.45	1.11	2.13	.85	1.85	1.42	2.65	.96	F
7.	happy-sad	.88	.72	1.81	.77	1.08	.75	1.53	.86	F
8.	objectionable-acceptable	2.85	.88	2.82	.93	3.07	.92	3.18	.55	
9.	desirable-undesirable	1.34	.88	2.87	.91	1.49	.73	1.72	.91	F
10.	suspicious-trusting	2.71	.84	2.81	.94	2.38	.85	2.57	.99	
Man make all decisions on a date										
11.	warm-cold	2.14	1.24	2.17	.88	2.14	1.22	1.95	.78	
12.	sad-happy	2.15	1.03	1.83	.99	2.05	1.01	2.02	.75	
13.	superior-inferior	2.81	.86	2.23	.72	1.74	1.03	2.16	.69	S
14.	threatened-neutral	2.31	.95	2.64	.89	2.55	1.18	3.18	.90	F, S
15.	pleased-displeased	2.48	1.25	2.11	.79	2.04	.97	2.06	.88	
16.	understanding-indifferent	2.24	1.28	2.47	.91	2.38	.95	2.62	.99	
17.	suspicious-trusting	2.09	1.24	2.28	.91	1.94	.97	2.47	.98	F
18.	disappointed-elated	1.73	1.12	1.61	.75	1.61	.96	1.73	.63	
19.	favorable-unfavorable	2.45	1.17	2.28	.99	2.15	.93	1.96	.95	
20.	uncomfortable-comfortable	1.84	1.31	2.15	.95	1.51	.85	2.66	.94	F

Table 1 (cont.)

Means*, Standard Deviations and Analyses of Variance for Neutral and Black SAS Forms.

Item No.	Situations,** Adjective Dimensions.	Females				Males				Differences Significant at .05***
		Form A		Form B		Form A		Form B		
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	
Woman in hometown										
21.	affection-disgust	2.51	.78	2.59	.67	2.43	.79	2.23	1.01	
22.	relish-repulsion	2.43	.68	2.38	.74	2.01	1.01	2.48	.85	F
23.	happy-sad	2.21	.58	2.87	.84	1.81	.90	2.31	.71	F
24.	friendly-hostile	1.95	.75	2.08	.88	1.13	.91	1.64	.94	F, S
25.	uninvolved-involved	1.05	.92	1.07	.98	2.18	1.08	1.03	1.13	F, S
26.	hope-hopelessness	1.85	1.03	1.78	.97	1.62	.89	1.81	.95	
27.	aloof-outraged	1.25	.91	1.13	.88	1.25	.87	1.25	.98	
28.	injure-kill	1.43	.82	1.54	.88	1.61	.85	1.72	1.03	
29.	safe-fearful	1.53	.95	1.46	.95	1.11	.91	1.14	1.00	S
30.	empathetic-can't understand	1.75	.98	2.25	1.39	1.56	1.14	1.93	1.20	F
Walking down the street alone										
31.	relaxed-tensed	2.78	.89	3.15	1.00	2.53	1.01	2.51	1.18	S
32.	pleased-angry	2.43	.73	2.48	.67	2.28	.98	2.13	.64	
33.	superior-inferior	2.48	1.22	2.59	1.19	1.74	.92	1.75	1.01	S
34.	smarter-dumber	1.49	.88	1.56	.88	.72	.93	1.25	1.01	F, S
35.	whiter-blacker	1.56	.95	.96	.93	1.36	.90	1.05	1.14	
36.	aggressive-passive	2.56	1.08	2.46	1.03	2.48	1.08	2.17	1.18	
37.	safe-unsafe	2.73	1.14	3.09	1.08	2.64	.83	2.22	1.18	
38.	friendly-unfriendly	2.28	.95	2.27	1.17	2.09	.93	1.55	1.26	S
39.	excited-unexcited	2.55	.95	2.51	1.00	2.11	.79	1.88	.64	S
40.	trivial-important	2.09	.91	1.75	1.11	1.99	.90	1.14	.90	F

EXHIBIT 1.

INSTRUCTIONS AND SITUATIONS FROM THE SITUATIONAL ATTITUDE SCALE*

INSTRUCTIONS

This questionnaire measures how people think and feel about a number of social and personal incidents and situations. It is not a test so there are no right or wrong answers. The questionnaire is anonymous, so please DO NOT SIGN YOUR NAME.

Each item or situation is followed by 10 descriptive word scales. Your task is to select, for each descriptive scale, the rating which best describes YOUR feelings toward the item.

Sample item: Going out on a date.

happy ' A ' B ' C ' D ' E ' sad

You would indicate the direction and extent of your feelings (e.g., you might select B) by indicating your choice (B) on your response sheet by blackening in the appropriate space for that word scale. DO NOT MARK ON THE BOOKLET. PLEASE RESPOND TO ALL WORD SCALES.

Sometimes you will feel as though you had the same item before on the questionnaire. This will not be the case, so DO NOT LOOK BACK AND FORTH through the items. Do not try to remember how you checked similar items earlier in the questionnaire. MAKE EACH ITEM A SEPARATE AND INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT. Respond as honestly as possible without puzzling over individual items. Respond with your first impressions whenever possible.

SITUATIONS

FORM A

- I. You meet your new roommate.
- II. You see a man make all the decisions on a date including where to go and what to order in a restaurant.
- III. A woman in your hometown has a 'loose' reputation.
- IV. You are walking down the street alone and must pass a corner where a group of men are loitering.
- V. Your best friend has just become engaged.

FORM B

- I. You meet your new roommate who is black.
- II. You see a black man make all the decisions on a date including where to go and what to order in a restaurant.
- III. A black woman in your hometown has a 'loose' reputation.
- IV. You are walking down the street alone and must pass a corner where a group of black men are loitering.
- V. Your best friend has just become engaged to a black person.

Copies of the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) are available from William E. Sedlacek, Counseling Center, University of Maryland, College Park, Md. 20742

Table 1 (concl.)

Means*, Standard Deviations and Analyses of Variance for Neutral and Black SAS Forms.

Item No.	Situations,** Adjective Dimensions.	Females				Males				Differences Significant at .05***
		Form A		Form B		Form A		Form B		
		MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD	
Best friend becomes engaged										
41.	aggressive-passive	1.55	1.14	2.13	1.32	1.61	1.29	2.24	1.10	F
42.	happy-sad	.71	1.18	1.56	1.43	1.14	1.11	1.38	1.13	F
43.	tolerable-intolerable	.80	1.00	1.06	1.35	1.08	1.15	1.06	1.22	
44.	complimented-insulted	1.14	1.09	1.54	1.07	1.18	.89	1.76	.97	
45.	angered-overjoyed	3.08	.98	2.37	1.22	2.77	.93	2.45	1.25	F
46.	secure-fearful	1.32	1.02	1.54	1.28	1.49	1.00	1.14	1.18	
47.	hopeful-hopeless	.77	1.18	1.13	1.14	.95	.90	1.32	1.28	
48.	excited-unexcited	.51	.71	1.65	1.38	1.09	.92	1.52	1.49	F
49.	right-wrong	1.29	1.22	1.59	1.20	1.32	1.16	1.11	1.54	
50.	disgusting-pleasing	3.14	1.09	2.27	1.43	2.97	.88	2.53	1.27	F

* Scale A to E(numerical equivalent 0 to 4).

** See Exhibit I for full situations.

*** Results of two-way MANOVA with F = significant effect for Form; S = significant effect for Sex